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AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE

THE

Belles Lettres and Union Philosophical

SOCIETIES

OF

DICKINSON COLLEGE, JULY, 11th, 1855.

BY

REV. D. D. WHEDON, D.D.

[AN HONORARY MEMBER OF THE BELLES LETTRES SOCIETY.]



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HOMER.

GENTLEMEN OF THE BELLES LETTRES
AND UNION PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETIES:

THE attractive pursuits which form the bond of union of your fraternities suggest to me not to move any deep question of science or metaphysics, in which, as heretofore I might be tempted to indulge; but with you to range, for a brief excursion, over the field of æsthetic literature. We will seek less the precious metal whose richness coruscates deeply in the mine, than the flowerets scattered by the hand of spring over the sunny surface of the living landscape. Yet, remembering that I am now not quite in the muses' bower, but under the shadow of the halls, where science sheds some severity, and breathes some earnest depth, even into the spirit of lighter literature, I select a topic in which fancy shall still be sobered by sedater thought. Allow me, without being supposed to interfere with the prerogatives of your Professors' chairs, to select a topic from your College course. Permit me to present for your contemplation the illustrious bard of antiquity—the laureate of the classic ages—the POET HOMER.

On the spacious poetic arena of the two great worlds of ancient and modern literature, there stand two transcendent spirits of kindred genius—rivals to each other—by all others unrivalled—HOMER AND SHAKSPEARE. Rivals, I say, and yet they stand at centuries of distance, unknown and unenvying each other. I pronounce them of kindred genius. No matter that one is epic, and the other dramatic. No matter that one spoke the almost miraculous Greek and the other magically moulded the plastic English. No matter that one trod the luxuriant soil of the summery Ionia; and the other hardened amid the Hyperborean blasts of the rugged Britannia. Beneath all the external accidents of form, language and clime, there is the *created* oneness of kindred genius and coequal greatness. There they stand—that wondrous two—the peerless pair—the highest masters in the highest walks of æsthetic art and power—two greatest of the sons of genius—two truest geniuses of the sons of men.

I called Homer the laureate of antiquity. I now call Homer and Shakspeare both laureates of nature—laureates of all external, earthly nature—specially laureates of the highest, namely, human nature. And their range is wide as all nature's range. They have a spiritual omnipresence all nature through. Into what depths of human heart, what chaos of human passions, have they not descended? What combination of cunning or formation of beauty have they not threaded? The reader of Shakspeare finds Shakspeare's sayings

cross him at every turn of life. The lines of Homer intertwined with all a Grecian's changes; and his spirit permeated all the Grecian ages. They were minds that had no one manner but every manner. They, each, seemed to possess all the characters of human kind within their own.

But who is this Homer? Here all erudition, + ancient and modern pauses. It interrogates history—but history is then in her childhood, and she prattles innocent incredibilities about him. It opens his own wondrous works; but he is too wrapt with his own entrancing *themes* to tell one fact about himself. Plagued with the tantalizing problem of this great authorship—a problem before which the question, *who was Junius?* is not fit to be asked—the ancient Greek epigrammatist resolved that Homer was Jove himself; for none inferior could have produced those immortal works. If all other great creations, traceable back to an origin of mystery, were reverently attributed to Jove supreme, why not those mighty creations, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*? Were they not two miraculous worlds—a twin pair of universes in themselves? Not quite satisfied with this solution, modern erudition, German and sceptical, takes up her microscope; and under its solving gaze, the solid person of Homer, *evaporates—gasifies into a myth!* The mythic gas then evolves and convolves, and soon under the incantations of the German magician, it begins to condense, solidify; and lo! instead of one, twenty Homers stand in goodly phalanx before us. But, verily, this is

liberal. Who would cry for one Homer lost, when he is compensated by a brace of Homers restored? These mighty master-pieces, then, were not produced by *Homer* merely, but by *Homer & Co!* It is altogether a company concern—the joint stock in trade of a corporation. And, then, the wonder of greatness and genius is entirely solved, by ingeniously distributing it among a number of proprietors, with each his fractional dividend. On such a theory I should be uncrupulous in using ridicule; since argument is almost out of place. One Homer seems to me quite enough to admit in all the rolling centuries; but our Teutonic cousins demand my faith in a score. They *reduce* the miracle by *multiplication*. Twenty Homers, all in one age and all at work upon one job! O the omnivorous faith of scepticism—the credulity of unbelief—the superstition of infidelity! The human race never furnished twenty Homers. There is not sparkle enough in the current of human vitality to generate them. The rolling river of human blood has not fire enough. Besides the *Iliad* is one—grandly one! One with all its free varieties; varieties of event—varieties of spirit. It is one with all its discrepancies and forgetfulness of itself. Its very varieties prove its oneness; since they speak for themselves as the varied unfoldings of one same boundless creativeness. I do not know then who *Homer* is;—whether he should be called by the letters that spell *that* name, or that spell the name of *Jove*. But this I know, that I could sooner believe that *Paradise*

Lost was written by a herd of Miltons, than that the Iliad was written by as many Homers. I feel myself, when under his song, as listening to the ever weaving spell of one great, unique, master sorcerer. Thankfully, in this late age, I receive the inspirations breathing through the lapse of ages, of that sublime, but unknown mind. It is not to be imagined because these immortal works *alone* have stood the test of time, that the living Homer was *alone* the poet of his age. He lived when the spirit of poetry was alive and vivid. For, account for it as we may, there is something wonderfully periodical in the appearance and disappearance of the galaxies of genius, in different ages. There seem to be great productive eras in genius, like the great life-periods of Geology, when prolific nature seems to pour from her creative cornucopia, the richest profusions of animated existence. So it was in the middle ages with the rise of the Troubadours in southern France. The spirit of history, awoke and walked over the sunny plains of Languedoc in the fresh bright morning of the thirteenth century and lo! all the green sward was purpling with the bloomlets of poesy—fresh and moist—all new and rejoicing as if just sprinkled by the dewy fingers of the grey dawn. How curiously then did blend the syllables of the Romanic and Gallic tongues into that witching dialect, which even now enchant the perusing scholar; so truly styled the Romance language. And, then, as if by one unanimous consent, how did the new poets—real live poets—born not made—spring into being?

They sang, like the spring birds, they knew not why; and were surprised to hear their song re-echoed from each vocal grove, from some strange songster, born like them to melody. Troubadour, Troubadour, where got ye that wondrous strain? And the Troubadour answers, I did not get it—it came. So the most gifted of the modern daughters of song, Felicia Hemans, could hear and copy, as if with the spirit's ear, the strains awakened in her own soul, by the inspirations of inborn genius. And so it is no intended fiction with Homer, and doubtless his contemporary bards, that they sang as an inspiring muse—daughter of Jove and Memory—dictated to them. The opening invocation of the Troiac Epos, calling down the enchanting syllables of his dictating Goddess

Μῆνιν ἄειδε, θεά,

As well as the opening prayer of the Odyssean legend.

Ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα.

were not with the primal old bard himself a truthless form—a say-so of mere poetic pretence. It was at a later period—an Augustan age of second-hand literature—when a voluntary dissembling took the place of the old living faith; and when cold and polished imitation superseded the primeval warm-hearted invention, that Virgil reiterated, according to precedent, the soulless formula

Musa, mihi causa memora.

And so, according to the same tradition, through

ages of set imitation, every poetaster who strided a Pegasus, must also have his muse; as every Quixote who mounts a Rosinante must have his Dulcinea. A bolder age, which despises the traditions of old imitation as much as the illusions of legendary faith, furnishes its *Byrons*; who sing with a mimic mock,

“Hail muse !et *cetera*.”

But the conception that the visions of genius are a gift—that they are a visitation from a supernatural world—is expressed with innocent simplicity by many a son of genius in different ages. Says the Irish Orator, Grattan, “during the recess of Parliament I retired into the country, considered on the public affairs and *thoughts and arguments came to me*.” And so says Pope of his own youth,

“While yet a child and not a fool to fame
I lisped in numbers, *for the numbers came*.”

Nay even the Geometrician at the black-board, as the combinations of the figures are presented before him, consciously feels that the new inference comes to him not only a gift—a grace—but an *irresistible grace*. And this fact, while it serves to refute the error of the old philosopher, that all knowledge is really slumbering in the mind, and only needs a stimulant to awaken it; so, on the other hand, it does illustrate the declaration of the Hebrew writer, that “there is a spirit in man and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding.”

But in the natural-divine economy, there seem to be ages rife and alive with genius; when its flashes dart from every point; breaking out with incessant electric streaks—pointed and forked—criss-cross and zigzag—until the whole firmament is ablaze with its ever varying play. Thus brilliant, like the age of the Provencal Troubadours, was, I fancy, the era of the Grecian *aidoi*, of whom Homer was immortal chief, and strange to say the sole survivor and type. With his *rhabdos* or sacred wand in one hand, and his melodious Phorminx on his arm, the son of the muses ranged along the domains of the Asiatic Greek mainland, or visited, in turn, the rocky isles—the Cyclades and Sporades of the blue Ægean. A gaze of admiration for his genius and reverence for its divine source, ever welcomed his approach to palace halls. And there he sang the legends of old heroic story; the sacred secrets of Olympian councils and intrigues, or, taking a deeper, diviner strain, he sang the birth of the creation. He told how, through the vast void, the deep coagulated into substance, and marshaled into form; how the fiery beam first sparkled, and the throb of life first quickened; how the hills first raised their spontaneous heads, and the plains shot up their speary forests, and assumed their crowning verdure. Of the effects of their minstrelsy tales are added, no way to be believed; how the fauns came out of the surrounding groves and danced to the minstrel's measures; how the enchanted oaks bowed their applauding tops and prepared to march in order down and encore the

last performance; and how the hard-hearted Parnassian rocks, gave up their critical immobility, and (more humane than some modern reviewers) all but melted at the strain.

Now in another century, John II. king of Castile, said, "I will have in my kingdom genius, and literature and eloquence and poetry." He was absolute king and could do what he pleased, and he decreed there should be genius. He erected academies of arts and sciences, he salaried literati, he established contests of literature and prizes for excellence. The machinery was all erected; the crank was duly turned; and the force pump brought forth in copious torrents the Heliconian stream. But on its surface the life-bubbles did not sparkle; it had a deadish flavor; a marvellous wooden twang; as tasting of the machine. Poetry by the yard, made by order and made to order, was manufactured and dearly paid for—dear at any price. It was a cash article, not because it was worth but because it cost cash. But all the produce of King John's entire machineries were not worth the first dactyl of a true Greek aoidos or the lightest catch that Troubadour ever flung upon his careless harp.

This world possesses, young gentlemen, but one truly inspired book. Yet there are one or two other volumes, which, though not inspired, I hold to be *Providential books*. What could we do in sacred and christian history and evidences, without JOSEPHUS? And if his publication were an accident, how sad the blank the accident of his non-publication would have left! It seems as if

that same Providence which has preserved the wonderful purity of the sacred text, has taken a prudential care, that no proper link should be wanting to our honest research, to place the *very base* of its authenticity proudly above the *summit level* of any other ancient document. And now, if Providence designed that after ages should possess a daguerreotype of one fair age of antiquity; if it were purposed that the very *life* of that age should live *forever* and be beheld by the living eye of all subsequent time, surely, for such a purpose there must be created a HOMER; and a HOMER must create both an ILIAD and an ODYSSEY. Hence, with what a minute accuracy must he catalogue the objects of antiquity! No matter how mean the *thing*; its name shall sweetly lie along in his Hexameter. The hovel shall stand upon his grounds, picturesque yet true. The stable and the kitchen, with all their odors and utensils, shall be fully detailed, and we shall love to visit and survey them. And then the poet in telling every event, shall stand by each actor; he shall trace each slightest motion; he shall report each slightest syllable; he shall picture each instrument and plan each scene; until you are insensibly Homer himself; and you see all he saw; and you hear all he heard. And so goes he on, weaving his pictured tapestry; thread after thread; thread after thread; each thread adding some new touch; and each touch some new increase of the spell that entrances you. No letter fresh from Sevastapol, by a sympathising spectator or suffering actor, was ever so

minute, or ever so vivid. What others tell in a sentence he pictures in a whole ballad. For instance, Pandarus shot an arrow. That is the whole of it; but hear how Homer sings it; as by me spoilt into English prose.

He pulled the covering off the quiver, and drew out an arrow,
Unshot, winged, source of black pains.
Quickly upon the leather-string he neatly fits the bitter arrow,
And he vowed to Apollo Lycian-born, archer-god,
To offer him a renowned hecatomb of first-born lambs,
When he should get home to his city of sacred Zeleia.
He grasped at once the arrow-notch and its ox-hide string;
He put the string to his breast, and the iron arrow on the bow;
And when he pulled the big bow to a circle,
Clinked the bow, shrieked the string, leapt the arrow,
Sharp-darting, and fierce to alight amid the crowd.

The enthusiast dwells upon the pages of Homer from the completeness of his pictures. But the antiquarian and the lexicographer, come, like crows after the zest of battle is over, to gather up—the one *materials* for his archæology; and the other *words* for his Dictionary. So is Homer a gazette from antiquity to modern ages. He is poetry for the romancer and science for the savan. He is picture for the connoisseur; and statistics for the census-man.

I have spoken of Homer's *language* as the most miraculous Greek. The process by which the unsettled and discordant chaos of an unformed language crystalizes into order, beauty and power, has, indeed, something not only of the *wonder*, but the *divinity* of miracle. A German scholar, Schlegel, has well remarked, that over this process

—the genesis of a nascent language—a veil of mystery seems flung, hitherto unsolved. Surely nothing is more unconcerted and elemental than the scattered particles of a language yet to be. And yet this floating confusion of drifting flood-wood, somehow or other, by most miraculous chance, erects itself into a symmetrical and towering palace—a building not made with hands—a spontaneous, unplanned structure, on which no line was ever drawn and no hammer ever sounded—like creation itself a mind-created fabric.

In the formation of an exquisite language, like the Greek, the subtlest of logic and the profoundest of metaphysics are exerted. Yet, strange to say, we are well informed that some of the native tribes of Africa have formed a language inferior in beauty, symmetry and power to the Greek alone. So true it is that man, even *rude* man, acts upon a natural and spontaneous metaphysics, which it takes more than all the acumen of the schools to analyse. Or, rather, we may say, man acts upon *spontaneous principles* the analysis of which is the profoundest of metaphysics. And now the formation of a language of a people is the expression of the soul and body—the *nature*, of that people. All the externals that go to form a people's character, through that character, form and color the language.

The Greek language was but the clear flowing out of the Grecian temperament. It was formed as the character of the race was formed. And hence the Greek, when the character of his literature is concerned, may put the superiority of his own

language as a make-weight in his own favor. For instance, in comparing Homer and Shakspeare, we may be ready to exclaim,—But the Greek has a thousand times the advantage in that unrivalled language; subtract from his side one quarter on account of that magnificent advantage, the Greek Hexameter. Or when a New Englander ventures to lay Webster's great Speech on the Land Bill against Demosthenes on the Crown, and he finds the judgment of the world inclining against him, he may be ready to cry out—Aye! but with that glorious Greek dialect on his lip our Daniel could have beaten the Grecian orator. True, replies the Greek, but our language is as legitimate a part of our boast, as our literature or our oratory. That language, like that literature, or rather as part and parcel of that literature, is the true born product of our race's genius. Our literature, language, hexameter and all, are the blooming out from the national heart—the crystalline jet sparkling up from that fountain of beauty—the Grecian soul. When, then, our immortal master-minstrel pours forth in his grand hexameters, such poetry as the world despairs to rival; when our great Athenian rhetor rolls out paragraphs of such oratory as no other human lip ever did, or ever can utter; both must stand, with all their own advantages, and all their own perfectness; producing, as a Greek, such masterpiece as GRECIAN *can* accomplish.

And the AGE of which Homer wrote, was *truly* styled HEROIC. It had left a lofty impress on the memories of men. Its characters and events had

created a world wide sensation; and the age succeeding had named the men and told the events with admiring wonder. There *are* heroic ages. There are periods upon whose spirits and sceneries rests the true picturesque; which the very mind that would repudiate is forced to feel. There was the age of *Chivalry*, on which the hues of romance *will* blend their entrancing effect. It was an age whose names melt smoothly into song; whose characters adorn the heroic legend; whose scenes will wind into the surpriseful plot; whose men rise gracefully and imposingly before our fancy. In vain shall some political economist, dear good democrat, tell me that it is all a plain mistake. He will lead me out from the boudoir of the baronial castle to show me the squalidness of the serfdom. He shall tell me of the insecurity of life, of the lawless brigandage, the unlettered ignorance, the shivering superstition, the plain downright misery and meanness of the times. He will decompose the blended hues and show me that this picturesque is all *imagination*. Imagination? I grant you; it is that I said. That age could—as other ages cannot—entrance the *imagination*. So a revolving kaleidoscope can—as a revolving dinner horn cannot—entrance the vision. Be it that the entrancement of the kaleidoscope is made up of glass and light and trinkets. The entrancement is just as real and far more possible than if made up of golden ingots and bankable promissory notes.

You will not I trust for one moment imagine me to be one of the mourners that “the age of Chivalry

is past." A picturesque age, like a picturesque prospect, may be more delightful to the spectator, for whom "distance lends enchantment to the view," than to the dweller in that land of beauty. An age of poetic interest may please the contemplator's fancy; but an age of plain enjoyment is the era of happiness. An age of heroism is romantic, but an age of honesty, of justice, of right, of equality, is infinitely preferable. The stirring events that *make history*, do not make public happiness. The unsettled times that create heroic adventure, create incessant disaster and universal misery.

Wonderful is the power of genius in shedding a perpetual enchantment over the scenes and localities of its historic narrations or poetic fictions. What right has that little rocky peninsula of Greece to make itself the focal point of classic interest to succeeding ages? Because the recording muse of her own *history* has clad her with the halo of its glory. What right had the men, the events, the institutes of Athens to claim a permanent and resplendent place in the view and memory of the world? Because they stood surrounded by the *glare* of the splendid explosions of Grecian genius. And so the comer from a far land, as he skirts the shores of the Hellespont, as he passes the Tenedos, and treads the Trojan plain, gazes with an enchanted eye. He is not now treading, ordinary, dirty, common-place, earth. Every sod and every lump is impregnate. It has a spirit in it. And over yon misty plains, spectral armies are still marching; spectral heroes still wave the battle

plume; a spectre city lifts its shadowy towers, girt with dreamy walls, and portaled with mystic gates. The spell of the blind old sorceror of Scio's rocky isle, pronounced three thousand years ago, still binds with its transfixing power, the gentle visiter of this haunted realm.

And curious it is to remark how little the magnitude and the extent of scenes and objects have to do with the interest we feel. He who directs his eye to the astronomic heavens, and sends his mind to range the immensity of measureless space, feels that this earth is a bare speck—a point—a *minimum visible*. But let him call in his contemplations, and direct his eye to the deep revelations of geology and lo! within that *speck* a new *immensity* is opened. That *point*—that *minimum* is found pregnant with a universe, whose grandeur swells the mind with a vastness scarce less than that which rose upon him from that outer immensity. Why? Because *either* vastness was enough to fill one little mind; and *neither* of course could more than fill it. And so, when we contemplate the vast areas of our globe that modern geography uncovers to our eye, and realise how over *all the hemispheres*, new national systems have arisen, how minute appear the petty strifes and wars of that little patch of Greece, and that little town of Athens. The puny navies that paddled around the Ægean and Ionian seas, afraid to lose the sight of shore, appear like the mimic craft, carved by our boys, for their pastime in a summer pond. And yet we take the volume of Thucydides, and when these little quarrels and fights are pictured

by his pen, they become *grand history*, sagacious politics, deep philosophy. They fill the mind as fully, they stir the soul as deeply, they instruct the intellect as profoundly, as events of far greater physical sizes and distances. There was a king of Macedon on the northern base of the little triangle of Greece, against whom Demosthenes thundered, and the southern Republics of Greece were called to combine—alas! only to be conquered. There was also an earlier Trojan aggressor, whose kingdom standing a little without the triangle, became the object of war from the same Greek Republics; it was conquered by the Grecian heroes, and sung by the Grecian poets. So at the present day, on the eastern margin of Europe, stands the empire of a modern young Alexander, including the eastern half of all Europe and the northern half of all Asia. Like the ancient Macedonian, he rises over the horizon and hovers like a storm-filled cloud over the civilized continent. Two proudest of modern empires, trembling at his dangerous power, have equipped and sent prouder armaments than history ever saw. In mere magnitude and extension the warlike doings of classic and Homeric ages would compare with these, as the little mountain printed on your maps, would compare with the real Andes. Yet not all the eloquence of modern parliaments, with all its magnitude of interests, can out-thunder the Athenian agora; nor can all the poetic Genius of the nineteenth century make an Iliad of Sevastopol.

The Homeric system of so called GODS AND GODDESSES is a mere poetic machinery. It rises not into

a philosophy, far less a theology. The deities of Olympus are only men and women of a finer mould, larger size and rather improved powers. Venus is a very handsome woman, Apollo is a gentleman of very rare accomplishments, and Mars a most gigantic military chieftain. Jupiter, whether imaged in Homer's hexameters, or chiseled in Phidias' marble, is a large and stately monarch, with an eye keenly *clairvoyant*, and an arm somewhat less powerful than the walking-beam of a modern steamer. Mercury in conveying a dispatch was decidedly inferior to the magnetic telegraph; and Vulcan's thunderbolts would stand a poor chance in front of Colt's revolvers, to say nothing of Paixhan guns. What knows Homer of the infinite One? What glimpse has he of him who filleth eternity and immensity; whose attributes, spread out on the wide universe, are thence divinely copied and spread out upon the pages of the Hebrew scriptures? Some inklings seem echoing around his mind of a supreme, universal, eternal FATE, under whose laws JUPITER himself is a half-conscious subject. But that idea of *fate* does not lead him up to that infinite PERSONALITY; from whose will and law alone all the fate that is proceeds. So true it is that truth is not only stranger, but grander and sublimer than fiction. Fiction is the conception of man; reality the conception of God. What saw ancient fancy in the skies? A glassy vault studded with starry spangles. What sees modern astronomy? An immensity floating with worlds. So science is immeasurably more poetical than poetry. Plato said God is a geometer. As truly,

he might have said, the Divinity is a poet. CREATION is God's great POEM.

The poems of Homer, by the common acknowledgment of all subsequent Grecian literature, were the fountain whence the brightest achievements of her arts were drawn. They tuned the minds of the sons of Hellas to that nobleness which produced her master pieces of poetry, oratory, architecture, painting and statuary. It has been said, that while the mission of Judaism was to teach mankind the lesson of the true *Divinity*; the mission of Rome to shape our minds to the majesty of a *state*; the mission of Greece was to develope and educate the world to the idea of the *beautiful*. And thus do our modern ages inherit the threefold patrimony of the *religious*, the *politic* and the *aesthetic*—producing the full developement of the ideas of *right*, *order* and *refinement*. What the Old Testament was to the mission of Israel, the solemn, sublime and stern inculcator of God and conscience; that the Homeric poems were to Greece, the Testament of the aesthetic—the fountain of the beautiful. And so was every part of the Grecian mind harmonised to a perfect ideality. This was exhibited, variedly, in the symmetrical architecture of Phidias; in the severe chasteness of the Attic drama; in the exquisite proportions of the Praxitelean statuary; in the purity and power of Athenian oratory; nay in the very demonstrative exactness of the Geometry of Euclid and the syllogism of Aristotle. Herein has consisted the true classic spirit—in the true blending of luxuriance and precision into a most chaste medium of perfected

taste—which born in Greece and transmitted to later ages has educated the mind of modern Europe to that exactitude, art, beauty, reason and practicality which has constituted Europe's historic greatness. The *classic* has been and is the *teacher of the practical*.

It has been lately said by a great American historian, that the fundamental idea of Christianity—the unity of deity and humanity in the world's Messiah—has through all modern ages tended to raise the soul of man towards God, and elevate the level of human history. In a far inferior sense, we may say, that the same idea, conceived in accordance with the mission of ancient Greece, of a divine humanity, tended to idealize and ennoble the material and gross realities of life. It was in short the main source of the beautiful. True, Homer did deify man as he is. He is liable to the charge brought against him with so much point by Longinus, that Homer made his men Gods and his gods men. In this we see by contrast the true divinity of Christianity. The Homeric Mythology deified man as he is; the Christian theology deified man as he should be. The former is the apotheosis of man's natural qualities, his depraved traits not *transformed* but *transfigured*; the latter presents perfect man and perfect God in unity. The tendency of the former was to invest with ideal lustre the corporeal, the intellectual, and the powerful, in connection with the lower and fiercer attributes of man's nature; the purpose of the latter is to take in all the ennoblement with which humanity can be invested, to purify man from lower nature, to elevate him above nature, and then to assimilate

him by purity and faith to the God with whom i brings him in contact.

This suggestive comparison, young gentlemen, with Homer, may relieve the minds of some men of finished educational taste, of that repugnance and even doubt arising from the fact that the Old Testament and the New do not obey the rules of rhetoric; nor stand the perfect and faultless models of symmetry and aesthetic taste. The Bible, remember, is not the book of beauty; but the book of religion, the book of conscience, the book of God. And though there be peals of surpassing beauty issuing from its grandeurs, yet is its main quality sublime and solemn. Its purpose is to train the *spiritual*, not the *aesthetical* man. We may see, in every-day life, men, whose moral feelings are high; whose pious character is blameless and deep. Yet is their taste rude and their manners ungraceful. Their character, as christians, may be perfect; but in their character as complete and model *men*, we feel a sense of very obvious imperfection. Now it is not the province of the Bible to teach specifically the *aesthetical*, any more than the scientific. But when to that religion which we obtain from the Bible, are added that knowledge we derive from science, and that refinement we secure from aesthetics, then do we obtain the qualities of the Christian, the scholar, and the gentleman united in the finished *man*.

Our sacred volume is not the book of the fancy, or the taste; it is the book of the *soul*. Yet through the moral, does it finally attain to a higher beauty than poetry ever dreamed, than aesthetics



ever taught. Achilles was the highest human model of Pagan poetry. But after mentioning Achilles, scarce dare we name that divine conception—that *true* immaculate conception—that ultimate of human excellence suffused with divinity, which christianity presents in the person of the God-man, the pure perfection of moral beauty.

Allow me to close then, sons of Dickinson, by congratulating you on the fact, that in accordance with the liberalised religious feeling of the age, the enlightened curators of your venerated Alma Mater do not fear to unite in your education, the classical, the scientific and the sacred. Remember that above all literature is God's own word; and the crown of a finished education is holy religious principle. Learn that aesthetic refinements may ornament a religious character; yet they are not necessary to its very existence. Nor allow the critical taste which education has supplied you, to generate an effeminate repulsiveness towards christian graces or the expression of spiritual truth, emotion, or experience, unassociated with taught refinements. Let the training of your sensibilities rather qualify you to the quick *enjoyment* of the *excellent*, than to sensitive suffering for the defective. So shall you carry a chaste and serene spirit, though duty call you to deal with the homelier realities of life; and yet an appreciative enjoyment amid its higher walks. And so shall your characters exhibit what is lovely and of good report in the eyes of man, and what shall secure acquittal beneath the all searching scrutiny of your final judge.

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